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CIA and Libya: U.S. probing link

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WASHINGTON — For more than 20 years, Edwin P. Wilson served his country as a valued worker for the CIA. But for the last five years, according to authorities, he has served mainly himself — and the likes of Libyan leader Col. Moammar Khadafy.

Wilson and another former CIA agent, Frank E. Terpil, were indicted last year on charges of running guns in 1976 and 1977 to terrorists in Libya. The two are now fugitives from justice, living abroad.

An associate of theirs — Roberta J. Barnes, — is being detained in Fort Worth, Texas, on a sealed arrest warrant naming her as a material witness in a federal grand jury investigation of their activities.

Former associates who have told their stories to law-enforcement agencies and the press say the charges against Wilson only hint at the ex-agent's multimillion-dollar business empire — one built largely upon the experience and expertise he gained during years of intelligence service.

Recent reports of his activities include allegations that he recruited American pilots and mechanics to fly and service planes for the Libyan military; that he enlisted former Green Berets to train terrorists in Libya; that he was connected with the shooting of a Libyan student in Colorado; and much more.

Wilson's activities remain under investigation by the Justice Department and the House Select Committee on Intelligence. Other grand jury probes into United States-Libyan connections have been or are being conducted in New York and Chicago.

Today, Wilson is safely ensconced in Libya's capital city, Tripoli, apparently secure from extradition to the United States. He conducts his business affairs from a two-story luxury villa near the Mediterranean. Terpil is thought to be living elsewhere, perhaps in Europe or the Mideast.

In an interview with an American journalist last July, Wilson denied reports of his links to Khadafy and insisted he had "never met the man." He also denied being involved in terrorist training activities, portraying himself simply as a businessman plying the import-export trade.

Wilson, now in his early 50s, began

working for the CIA in 1951. Almost a quarter-century of classified work with the agency and other U.S. intelligence services gave him an intimate knowledge of worldwide military trade, communications, high technology and valuable secrets that reportedly form the basis of a lucrative private empire. Wilson is said to have claimed control of more than 100 companies around the world.

In 1976, according to federal authorities and published reports, Wilson began work on a highly profitable business deal with Khadafy.

The transaction, for which Wilson was later indicted, provides a glimpse of his method of operations. Implying that his work was sanctioned by the CIA, Wilson was able to obtain arms, sensitive communications equipment and other electronics devices for sales that are forbidden by U.S. export restrictions.

According to criminal charges filed against them in April 1980, Wilson and Terpil arranged to ship 40,000 pounds of illegal explosives and timing devices to Libya in 1976 and 1977. A California explosives manufacturer, who cooperated with investigators, pleaded guilty in the case. He was fined \$5,000 and sentenced to four months in prison.

Implicated, though not charged, was Scientific Communications Inc., a longtime supplier to the CIA. At a meeting in a Virginia bar with a Wilson employee in the summer of 1976, company representatives agreed to manufacture prototypes of a device capable of detonating explosives at a precise time.

Scientific Communications president Joe Halpain delivered the timers to a Virginia motel, where they were picked up by Wilson and one of his employees. Halpain has said that Wilson duped him, telling him that the devices were to be used to clear minefields for American oil companies working in the Libyan desert.

Wilson is said to have received \$1 million from Khadafy for the munitions sale, a reported \$40,000 of which went to Scientific Communications for 1,000 timers.

Wilson's name also surfaced earlier this year after a former Green Beret was arrested in New Mexico on charges of attempted murder in the wounding of a Libyan student in Colorado. The accused assailant,

Eugene A. Tafoya, had Wilson's business card and the telex number for Wilson's Swiss-based companies with him when he was arrested.

Although Tafoya was subsequently convicted of reduced charges in connection with the shooting, his arrest helped trigger a new round of reports of Libyan murder teams in the United States. Those reports helped convince U.S. authorities to close the Libyan embassy in Washington, which the FBI said was a source of murder plots against more than 100 Libyans disloyal to Khadafy and living in the United States.

But after those startling allegations came reports of a Libyan terror network that has marked American officials at home and abroad, including President Reagan, for assassination. Reagan has said that the United States has "solid evidence" of such plots.

Word of the Libyan hit squads was reportedly passed to the White House shortly after two U.S. jets downed two Soviet-built Libyan fighters off the North African coast last summer. That incident dramatized the rapidly deteriorating relationship between the United States and Libya.

Earlier this month, Reagan asked all U.S. citizens, many of them oil-company workers, to leave Libya. The move was widely viewed as a first step in what could be the final break between the two countries, closely tied by commerce since Americans made the first oil discoveries in the Libyan desert 25 years ago.

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EN ROUTE TO A HEARING before a U.S. magistrate, Roberta J. Barnes, 33, leaves the Tarrant County Jail in Fort Worth, Texas, on Tuesday. Barnes, partially hidden by a federal marshal, is being held in lieu of \$520,000 bail on currency violations. She is a key witness in the federal investigation of the activities of Frank E. Terpil and Edwin P. Wilson, two former CIA agents accused of aiding Libyan leader Col. Moammar Khadafy.

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